

¡viva venezuela!

■ Vol 4 ■ Issue 2 ■ Autumn 2014



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- Progressive Change Continues
- Billions announced for Investment in Regeneration
- Latin America Stands With Gaza
- 65+ British Politicians Oppose US Sanctions

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Venezuela's Progressive Change Continues

Despite continued US aggression and anti-democratic destabilisation by the right-wing opposition, President Maduro continues to take Venezuela's revolution forward.

Following President Hugo Chávez's death in March 2013, the US, its international allies and Venezuela's Right thought the moment they had been waiting for had arrived. Without Chávez, they reckoned, the Bolivarian Revolution would surely unravel – and to aid that, they would hasten its demise by unleashing a well-orchestrated destabilisation plan.

The plan centred on waging what the Venezuelan government termed an 'economic war,' with those opposed to the democratic government using their economic power in a way reminiscent of Chile in the 1970s. This included hoarding food and essential daily items, overpricing durables, trucking consumables as contraband over the border to Colombia and large-scale hard currency speculation.

The right-wing opposition expected its negative consequences to erode Chavismo's electoral base. It certainly contributed to the close

Presidential election result in April 2013. But it could not stop Nicolas Maduro's election in a poll deemed free and fair by a wide range of international observers.

Seeing the outcome, Henrique Capriles (the defeated candidate) called on his supporters to 'vent their anger'. This they surely did, with a wave of street violence aimed at ousting the government. Fourteen people, two of them children, died.

Skilful leadership and policies to benefit the majority of the population, with the government launching a number of measures to tackle overpricing in the economy, transformed the narrow victory of the April 2013 presidential elections into a solid victory in the December 2013 municipal elections. Pro-government candidates won 76% of the country's mayoralties and the Right only 23%.

President Maduro proceeded to call on the Right to enter a dialogue with his government to jointly address long-standing problems the country faced: crime, distribution of basic consumables, financial speculation and so forth. Many opposition mayors responded positively.

Partly to prevent such collaboration, Venezuela's extreme right, funded by the US, launched La Salida ('the ousting'), a political campaign of street violence aimed explicitly at ousting the government (as covered in depth in the last Viva Venezuela). This led to both a tragic loss of life – 42 people, the principal



causes being lethal right-wing violence and deliberately dangerous street barricades – and US\$10-15bn worth of infrastructure damage. The violent 'ousting' campaign has since dwindled, having only ever been supported by the extreme minority within the minority of the country that the opposition represents. But President Maduro has maintained his call for dialogue, involving Latin America, notably the Union of South American Nations, to participate as guarantors.

Since then, President Maduro has reshuffled his cabinet and announced a number of new policies to better address the country's economic problems. Mechanisms to monitor and tackle overpricing have been strengthened, and a meeting held with Colombia's President to establish a raft of measures to combat contraband.

Venezuela has also seen a successful congress of the governing PSUV party, which has further placed the party – by far the country's largest in terms of grassroots involvement and with the greatest electoral support – at the centre of the political process.

This welcome progress deserves international support, while maintaining vigilance against the threats of intervention and destabilisation.

This magazine is published by the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

Contributors to this issue were:

- Lee Brown
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Venezuela Solidarity Campaign



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John Ayling, Branch Chair
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New \$1.2 Billion Investment Announced to Regenerate Venezuela's Poorest Areas

Investment in social spending and infrastructure is continuing in Venezuela, with the Government announcing an investment of 7.3 billion bolivars (\$US 1.2 billion) in urban and rural regeneration as part of its pledge to eradicate extreme structural poverty by 2018.

Renovating housing in barrios (shanty towns) is one key part of the investment programme, which also includes the construction of new public spaces, the installation or improvement of basic services, new community policing initiatives and

the promotion of community organisations and activities. The work will be undertaken by the 'New Barrio, Tricolour Barrio Great Mission' a government social programme set up to improve living standards in the country's barrios in a comprehensive and sustainable fashion. The new injection of funds almost doubles the amount spent on the programme so far this year.

The funding will be directed to 63 geographical zones across the country where the programme currently works as well as ten new targeted zones.



Mercosur Summit Emphasises Continued Social Progress in Latin America

Mercosur recently held its 46th Presidential Summit in Caracas.

The Common Market of the South is a customs and trade alliance founded in 1991. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela are full members, with the grouping comprising 275 million inhabitants and 83% of South America's GDP.

Although initially envisaged as a free trade bloc, the steady consolidation of progressive, left-wing governments across the region has led Mercosur to reject free market principles in

favour of a more social and integrationist direction. Dilma Rousseff of Brazil was quick to emphasize that the more equal development of member countries, regardless of relative economic power, was now the *raison d'être* of the organization.

Venezuela took over the rotating presidency in July 2013 and has focused on pushing for an increased focus on social justice, including the development of literacy and hunger eradication programmes and the launch of *Mercosur*



President Maduro with President Mujica of Uruguay

Indigena, to ensure representation for Latin America's indigenous populations. Bolivia has also been fully incorporated into Mercosur under Venezuela's presidency.

People's Solutions to Climate Crisis Set Out

Social movements gathered on Isla Margarita, Venezuela, in the summer to discuss their demands

ahead of United Nations climate talks due to take place in Lima, Peru, in December.



Green groups celebrate the declaration

The meeting, organised by the Venezuelan government, was the first of its kind. It brought together social movements from all over the world and facilitated discussions to arrive at the Margarita declaration, which will eventually form part of the civil society input for Lima.

According to Friends of the Earth International, "the innovative declaration goes right to the heart of a wealth of important issues that have been long-neglected due to a lack of political will at the UN climate talks.

It emphasises the need for justice in the response to climate change, and the need to transform our societies to prevent further environmental decay and social injustice."

Governing Socialist Party Congress Charts the Way Ahead

Despite hype from elements of the right-wing media in Venezuela that the Third Congress of the governing United Socialist Party would be dominated by internal divisions, the opposite proved to be the case, with over 1000 attending and delegates rallying behind the leadership of President Maduro, whom they elected as PSUV president.



TeleSUR English Launched

The Spanish-language television network started by Venezuela with other nations in the region to provide news for and from Latin America will now reach audiences in English.

Over two million members voted throughout the country to elect 537 delegates who engaged in three days of intense discussion and debate.

President Maduro had called for a "lively Congress, which has looked for a debate as the boxer looks for a fight, which doesn't run from criticism nor public opinion" and described as excellent the special sessions with ministers, arranged so delegates could question and criticise ministers' performance.

The Congress adopted 32 resolutions – resulting from over 25,000 grassroots proposals to the Congress – that emphasised

four key aims: to deepen democracy; expand and improve social programmes; intensify the transformation of the state and economy; and oppose internal and external attempts to destabilise Venezuela.

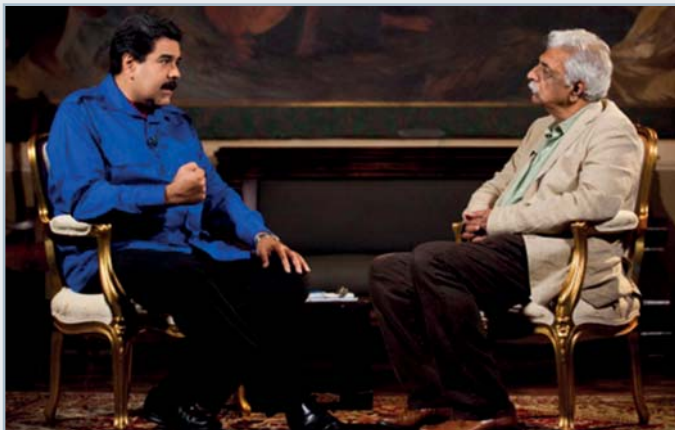
Numerous international motions were also passed including one on Israel's war crimes in Gaza and support for the struggles against austerity in Europe.

There were over 70 delegations from across the globe, with Presidents Evo Morales (Bolivia), Pepe Mujica (Uruguay), Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua) and Salvador Sanchez Ceren (El Salvador) present.

Under the strapline "Don't resign yourself to having just one side of the story", TeleSUR unveiled a news website that will serve as a hub for hours of daily multimedia programming in English.

While the main goal will be to reshape views about Latin America with dispatches from around the region, it will also offer an alternative take to mainstream media coverage of world events.

One of its first programmes was an interview by Tariq Ali of Nicolas Maduro (pictured) which can be viewed at www.telesurtv.net/english



Tariq Ali interviews President Maduro

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Splits in Right-Wing Opposition

Venezuela's opposition is divided. VSC Secretary Dr. Francisco Dominguez asks if it will choose an electoral road or coups and destabilisation

Venezuela's coalition of right wing opposition parties is in turmoil after the resignation of Jose Ramon Aveledo, its Executive Secretary, and the further resignation of its Assistant Secretary, Ramon Jose Medina.

Sharp internal criticism has been levelled against the leadership of the Mesa de Unidad Democratica (MUD) coalition, not only Aveledo but also defeated presidential candidate Henrique Capriles and Primero Justicia, the party headed by Julio Borges. It is well known that Primero Justicia is the darling of the US Republican Right and, reportedly, gets the bulk of the US funding provided to the opposition (over US\$120 million since 2002).

Key figures such as Roberto Enriquez reacted by announcing that his COPEI party would leave the MUD if its internal crisis were not resolved. Henry Ramos Allup of the ADECO party blamed the extreme right for forcing Aveledo's resignation.

This extreme right, led by Leopoldo Lopez, Maria Corina Machado and Antonio Ledezma, have also joined the critical chorus. They charge the MUD leadership of failing to support their unconstitutional effort to oust President Maduro during the eight weeks of violent street protest (*La Salida*) at the beginning of the year. At a recent coalition meeting they also accused the MUD of refusing to support their call for a constituent assembly, in effect an appeal for the overthrow of the government. Capriles' response was that there is no quick fix to get rid of the government – exactly the opposite of what he said almost a year ago.

The MUD's current crisis is the direct result of its political isolation brought about by the extreme right's street barricades' violence (*guarimba*). The *guarimba* met massive rejection (pollsters registered 80% against it in February and 85% in March).

Henrique Capriles' public standing is also weak. A *Hinterlaces* poll at the beginning of July

showed that just 23% think he is the opposition leader.

To many analysts, MUD is not only deeply divided but has no concrete proposals to address any of the nation's problems. Since 2012, it seems to either parrot the government by falsely promising to improve upon existing social programmes, or swing back to its pre-2012 ways of plotting to unconstitutionally oust the government.

As things stand in the opposition camp, the relation of forces favours the Aveledo-Capriles axis. However, the political pressure from the extreme right is intense. As a result, Capriles and company continue to equivocate. The very small extreme right is unable to carry the day, but there is a rather weighty factor in the equation – the US. As its latest aggressive moves show, the US's policy towards Venezuela continues to be determined by the Republican Right, and this can only help encourage extreme and anti-democratic elements in the opposition.



Greetings to all delegates.
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Successful Workers'

"We need to build a new economic model in the country" said Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro at the opening speech of August's National Congress of Workers launched by the progressive CBST trade union centre (a TUC equivalent).

Adding "You can count on my support to recover the companies abandoned" by firms that do not invest, he explained trade unions can rely on the Government's support to re-activate businesses and production units that are not contributing to the development of the country.

"Whoever gets involved in the economic war, in one way or another, the workers, with the law in their hands, must take over this production unit

(...) and make it work," Maduro said, referring to what he alleges is economic sabotage committed by big business. The Venezuelan government has repeatedly accused the opposition and big companies of attempting to destabilise the economy, for instance by storing basic products to create a situation of scarcity, and then selling the same products at high prices.

Maduro also said that Venezuela's Labour Law was the late Hugo Chávez' greatest demonstration of his commitment to workers' rights and urged trade unionists not to allow this law to go unheeded, by studying it and fighting for its application.

Over 6,500 delegates attended the Congress, including rural workers, industrial workers and civil servants.

Wills Rangel, president of the CBST, noted that the Congress was not representing any sector specifically, not even the CBST, but rather *"all the male and female workers of the country"* who were part of the country's transformation.



President Maduro with trade union leaders



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Congress Held



Cheering crowds at the successful congress.

The Congress debated plans and proposals for economic development, with Rangel urging increased investment in state owned companies. He also called for the continuing construction of a committed and progressive union movement, genuinely representing all working people in Venezuela, adding that *"we bear the responsibility to make the revolution irreversible."*



During an August edition of the regular radio programme *In Touch With Nicolas Maduro*, Venezuela's President announced the creation of what will be known as the National Labour Council, where the working people of Venezuela and their representatives will be able discuss important matters directly with the government, in addition to providing a space for discussion on developing further policies in the interests of the majority of people.

The national council's delegates will be chosen by working people and their organisations such as the CBST, and will include amongst its tasks helping to develop mechanisms to solve difficulties faced by the Venezuelan economy, including hoarding and over-pricing by elements of big business who are politically hostile to the country's elected government.

Similar discussions will also take place on a regional level.

"The Bolivarian alternative demonstrates a world can be built on need not greed"

Bob Crow
1961 – 2014



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Say No to U.S. Intervention in Venezuela

Administration split on Venezuela?

By Mark Weisbrot

If all the crises in Gaza, Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan weren't enough, the Obama administration [recently] embarked on a path to break diplomatic relations with Venezuela. But the drama was cut short when the Dutch government announced that it would not allow the extradition of Hugo Carvajal, a Venezuelan retired general whom Washington wanted to bring to trial in U.S. courts. This story is worth a post-mortem because it reveals an important split within the administration on policy toward Latin America.

On July 23, Carvajal was detained by authorities in Aruba, despite the fact that he was admitted to the island on a diplomatic passport and was named consul general to Aruba. Aruba is a small island just 17 miles from the north coast of Venezuela that is part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The U.S. claims that Carvajal was involved in drug trafficking, and he was put on a U.S. blacklist in 2008. But whether there is any substance to the charges is beside the point. An extradition of this sort, were it to happen to almost any country in Latin America, would be a serious offence that could cause that government to break diplomatic relations with the U.S. There is the violation of the basic principle of diplomatic immunity, which is one of the most fundamental international agreements that allows governments to negotiate even during wars.

A judge in Aruba upheld the detention, but then the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands cut the legal process short by announcing that Carvajal did in fact enjoy diplomatic immunity. Carvajal immediately headed home to Venezuela.

Washington under President Obama has long been divided on how to deal with Venezuela,

even as it pursues a general strategy oriented toward regime change. Most of the foreign service professionals generally prefer to have diplomatic relations. But within the executive branch and of course in Congress there are others who fear that this could lead to a normalising of relations. In May, the House passed legislation placing economic sanctions on selected Venezuelan government officials.

There is no need to comment on the alleged rationale for the legislation, which was to punish human rights violations. The Egyptian government has killed more than a thousand people since the military coup in July 2013, and sentenced 700 to death. The Israelis have also killed more than a thousand people in Gaza in the past weeks - most of them civilians. Not only is there no talk of sanctions, there is not even talk of reducing or even conditioning the billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, including military aid, that flow annually to these countries.

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Mark Weisbrot at VSC Conference.

The sanctions legislation was a transparent attempt to blow up diplomatic relations with Venezuela, indifferent to the collateral damage that it would do to relations with the rest of the region. But it was blocked in the Senate, because President Obama did not want to break diplomatic relations with Venezuela, and he wasn't about to put himself in the position of having to veto the bill.

In February the Venezuelan government offered to exchange ambassadors with the U.S., but Washington would not accept. A few weeks ago the U.S. and Venezuela exchanged chargés d'affaires, one step below ambassador. In U.S. diplomatic history for at least the past 50 years, there are almost no known cases of Washington refusing to exchange ambassadors with a country with which it has diplomatic relations. So, an exchange of ambassadors could be delayed, but probably not denied. The move to extradite Carvajal was another attempt by the hard right to blow up diplomatic relations with Venezuela and thereby further isolate the U.S. regionally.

There is little doubt that if President Obama really wanted the extradition, the government of the Netherlands would have cooperated.

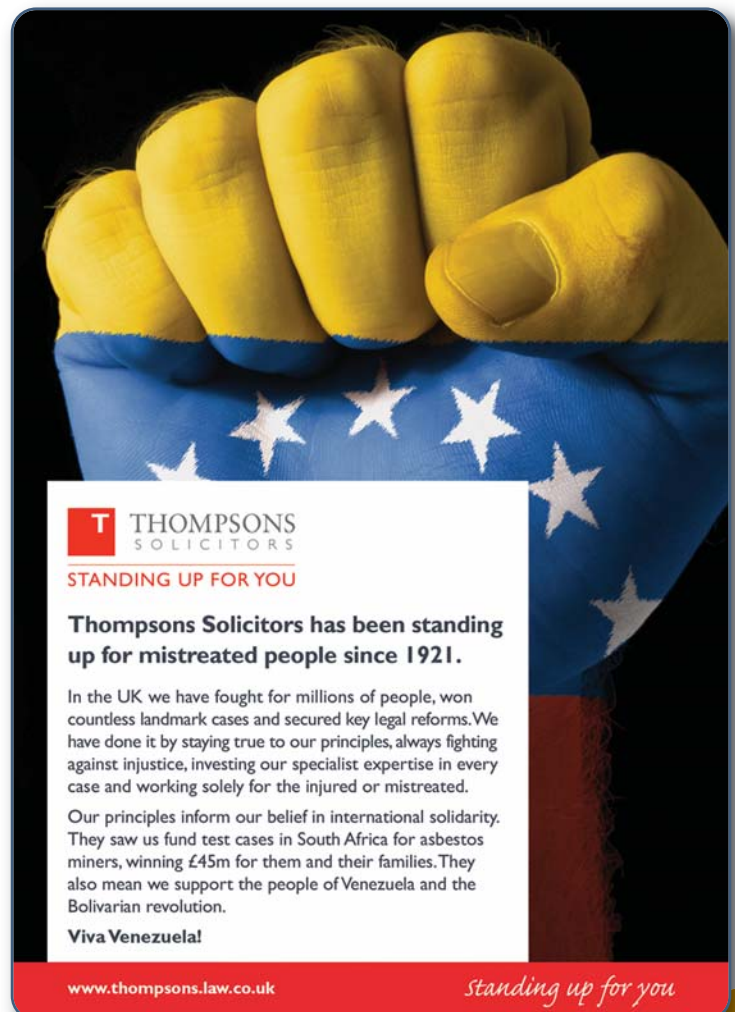
So once again President Obama has managed to block a right-wing attempt to break diplomatic relations with Venezuela, without even having to say a word about it. To avoid further drama of this sort, he should just exchange ambassadors with Venezuela, and announce that the U.S. government intends to normalise relations with Latin America in general. This would send a message to the extremists both inside and outside of government that it is not so easy to sabotage diplomatic relations in the hemisphere.

- Mark Weisbrot is co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in Washington, D.C. & spoke at the VSC Conference in May. This article is edited & reproduced from www.justforeignpolicy.org

65+ British Politicians Oppose Proposed US Sanctions

With the help of our supporters contacting their MPs, 68 leading British politicians from six different political parties, including former ministers Frank Dobson, Peter Hain, Sir Gerald Kaufman, Joan Ruddock and Andrew Smith, have signed a statement supporting Latin America's work for peace and dialogue in Venezuela and opposing proposed US sanctions on Venezuela.

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Viva Venezuela!

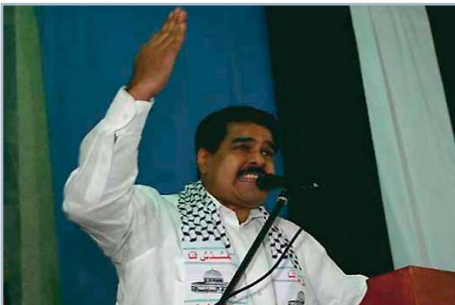
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Venezuela Leads the Way in

In contrast with Western complicity with Israel's attack on Gaza, Venezuela and its allies are offering concrete help to Palestine, says Matt Willgress



Palestinian girl expresses her thanks to Venezuela.



Nicolas Maduro has spoken out for Palestine again & again on the international stage, first as Foreign Minister & now as Venezuela's elected President.



Hugo Chavez's image appeared on marches across the Middle East at the time of Israel's 2009 assault on Gaza.



The Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Ministry was transformed this summer into a hub of activity as Venezuelans responded en masse to their Government's call to provide donations for Gaza.

"We have more than a plane's worth of donations to send, more than two tons of food, clothes and medicine," explained Danielis Escalona Arellano, who has been directing the effort.

Many of those bringing donations to the centre felt that Palestine was suffering and that international organisations were failing to protect them. *"There is so much injustice and the world is asleep,"* commented Maribel Brazon, who brought medical supplies.

Additionally, Venezuela is due to begin sending 240 million litres of oil to Palestine every four months as part of the creation of the new body *PetroPalestina*.

Although the oil was originally intended to be sent to the West Bank, Palestinian authorities have confirmed that it will now be sent to Gaza, where it will be used to restart electricity generation since, as Palestinian ambassador to Venezuela, Linda Sabeh Ali, explained, *"the only plant in the zone was bombed by Israel and now is in total darkness."*

Thousands also marched through Caracas on numerous occasions throughout the summer, demanding an end to Israel's siege of Gaza. In contrast to the attitude of many Western governments, these rallies have been announced in government media as well as progressive independent news sources, with a Twitter account associated with President Maduro even publicising them.

In motivating support for donations and a protest march, President Maduro said, *"Israel, [is] recognised by the UN [as] an occupying power that has been displacing Palestinians from their historic territory,"* before confirming his government will give asylum and shelter to children orphaned by the onslaught. Earlier on in the attack on Gaza, President Maduro condemned *"Israel's unjust, disproportionate and illegal military attack."* Launching an "SOS Palestine" campaign he said: *"Enough already, I've joined the campaign."*

"#SOS Palestina, let's launch it," he said while holding up a handwritten placard, adding, *"our international position over the issue of Palestine is just."*

Venezuela is not alone as other progressive governments in Latin America have also taken action.

As Latin American leaders met for a summit of the regional bloc Mercosur, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela announced in a

Solidarity with Gaza

statement that they “energetically condemn the disproportionate use of force by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, which in the majority affects civilians, including children and women.”

Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Peru and Brazil have also recalled their ambassadors.

These positions and initiatives in solidarity with Palestine reflect a proud tradition in Venezuela in recent years.

Former President Hugo Chávez cut diplomatic relations with Israel after its earlier war on Gaza. His stance was again emphasised in the aftermath of the massacre on board the Gaza-bound aid ship Mavi Marmara in 2010, with Chávez asserting that the attack was “an act of war undertaken by the Israeli army against defenceless civilians.”

Following the UN vote which established Palestine as a non-member state, a Palestinian delegation from Ramallah visited Venezuela. A further notable gesture was the abolition of visas for Palestinians wishing to travel to the country.

Most recently, just weeks before Israel’s attacks on Gaza, President Maduro received Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, explaining that “the Palestinian cause is the world’s cause.”

A key reason for the visit was to establish the aforementioned *PetroPalestina*, an organisation aimed at helping fulfil the oil demands of the besieged Palestinian economy that will, in the words of Maduro, “firm up the supplying of diesel from Venezuela to Palestine.”

Discussions were also held on the creation of a Palestinian centre of *Mission Miracle*, a programme which, free of charge, uses laser surgery to restore sight to people who can’t afford private attention.

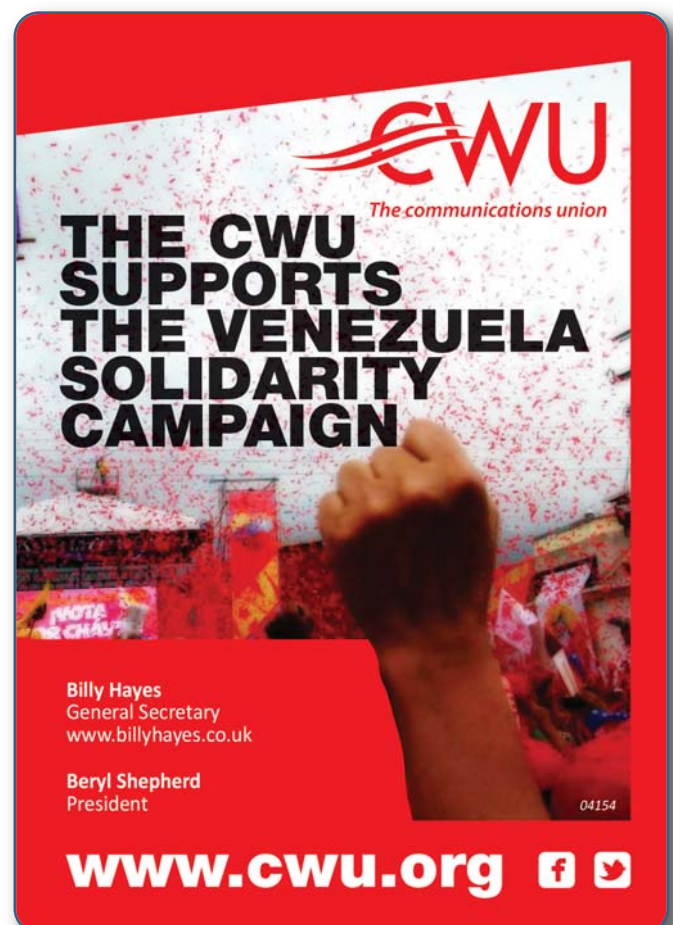
As the holder of the world’s largest oil reserves, with a repeatedly elected progressive government in power committed to national sovereignty and the redistribution of wealth, Venezuela has faced constant hostility from the US in recent years. No doubt Venezuela’s stance on Palestine and other Middle East questions, and its support for international

justice more generally is another reason for this hostility.

It can also be added that one certain consequence if Venezuela’s revolution were ever overthrown would be the country’s dramatic realignment with the US camp internationally. Venezuela’s Foreign Minister Elias Jaua has criticised sectors of the Venezuelan right-wing opposition for questioning the decision to send aid and oil to Gaza, accusing such groups of exhibiting “a lack of humanity.” Indeed, the Venezuelan opposition has previously promised to reestablish relations with Israel were it to win power.

In 2012 leading opposition figure and metropolitan mayor of Caracas, Antonio Ledezma, travelled to Israel and met with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, stating the opposition’s “willingness, under a new government ... to reestablish relations with the state of Israel.”

● This article was originally published in the *Morning Star*.



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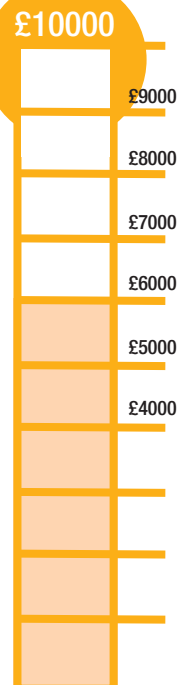
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The money received has gone towards a successful national conference and an ongoing speaking tour, with more resources still needed to increase lobbying of MPs and opinion formers, plus the production of a wide range of information materials telling the truth about Venezuela.



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**Mick Whelan, general secretary, Alan Donnelly, president
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